IN THE LAND OF THE BOOM

The Manifold Wonders of Southern California.

FORTUNES FROM THE EARTH.

Town Lots and Orange Blossoms.

A COUNTRY'S MARVELLOUS GROWTH

Its Varied Attractions and Resources.

The Beginning and Development of the Boom—People Pouring in—The Rush for the Land—Amazing Increase of Values; On Some Lands a Thousandfold—The Town Lot Craze—Planting Towns—Spreading Over the Country—Orange Groves—Lands Once Thought Barren Now Producing Richly—The Present State of the Boom.

The assessed value of all property in California in 1886 was $768,000,000; in 1887 it was $900,000,000, an increase of $132,000,000. Of this great increase the three lower counties, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and San Diego, show nearly $72,000,000, or more than three and a half times as much as the gold and silver product of the State in 1887, which was $20,000,000. The aggregate increase in the counties of Fresno, Tulare, Kern, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and San Diego, all in the lower part of the State, was $88,000,000. In Los Angeles county alone the increase of assessed value was $55,000,000. The assessed value of property in Los Angeles county in 1886 was $37,560,880; in 1887, $92,796,666. The assessed value of San Bernardino county in 1886 was $8,089,305; in 1887, $15,937,995; of San Diego county in 1886, $9,961,282; 1887, $18,712,513. Santa Barbara in 1886, $8,585,485; in 1887, $16,035,982.

The wonderful boom of whose later growth these figures afford some indication, is not a bubble in the sense that it is something that may collapse and disappear. It is not even likely to diminish in its general proportions, but rather to continue to grow, though in parts it may recede somewhat in prices and glow less brightly in color. The boom has far exceeded first anticipations. Some of the old residents are still actively engaged in big enterprises; others, men of brains, and of courage, too, got out a year or more ago, believing that the boom had reached its height, only to see new men take hold where they had left off, and prices keep moving up.

Real estate men have been attracted from all over the country, including men of push, energy, and nerve; and some men of capital, who have taken large tracts of land and made them ready for settlement before offering the land on the market. The first step is to supply the land with water. Some large and creditable work has been done in hydraulic engineering. Irrigation is the key that unlocked the treasures of the soil.

The cities existing before the boom began have multiplied in population, and young cities and towns have arisen at a touch. Land hitherto thought useful only for grazing purposes, or not even fit for that, some of it covered with sage brush and scraggy bushes, has been proved to be of extreme value with water applied, and many thousands of acres that appeared as barren wastes are now valued at hundreds of dollars an acre.

Some big fortunes have been made and many smaller ones of $10,000, $20,000, $30,000, $50,000 and $75,000 each; and many persons have made little sums of a few hundreds and thousands of dollars on various kinds of property. Some buyers of town lots have realized immense profits on their investments, and many have come out whole or with some gain; and thousands have lost or will lose money invested in town lots. The town lot business has been enormously overdone.

It is a magnificent country of mountains, valleys, and plains, possessing in many of its parts a prolific soil and a delightful climate, and presenting many attractions. The prices at which acreage property, covering a large territory, are now held, were never heard of before except for comparatively small sections naturally and exclusively adapted to special crops, and near to or in easy and cheap communication with large markets. Residents and property owners say that these values have been and will be more than justified by the returns from the land, and that the delightful climate and other attractions of the country will draw rich people in large numbers, and that health seekers will continue to come, all contributing to maintain and enhance values. Of the rise and progress of the boom and the present indications some account is here given.

THE BEGINNING OF THE BOOM.

Only a Gentle Rise at First, and then an Outburst Beyond All Expectation.

This is the story of a man who went to southern California in 1854:

"Then the population of Los Angeles was about 3,000, made up mainly of native Californians, Spaniards from Mexico and Sonora, and Mexicans; mostly Mexicans. There were perhaps a hundred Americans who had drifted there from all over the country. Many of them were gamblers whose games were patronized by the Spaniards and Mexicans. Main street was then as it is now, only of course there was not so much of it. The Spaniards owned ranches outside the city, and some of them were rich in property and cattle. Even the richer people lived in adobe houses.

As early as '49 the presence of the miners in the northern part of the State created a greater demand for cattle, and more money found its way into the South. In '54 the Spaniards had begun to live more luxuriously and to travel some. They were good-looking men, of polished manners, polite to women, accomplished in the ball room, and graceful even in business. The ladies were refined and beautiful. There were also some cultivated and graceful men and women among the high-class Mexicans and native Californians. All were Catholics. There was a distinct line between this class and the next grade below, which was composed of native Mexicans from Sonora and of half-breeds of Mexican and Indian blood, in many shades of blending, and Indians and the rougher Americans.

After the close of the Mexican war there were hard feelings between the lower class Mexicans and the Americans, and for years things were unsettled and unsafe, and it was difficult to administer the law. It was not an encouraging place for an American to live in until along about in 1858. Then things got quieter. By that time the mining region of the State had been overrun and much of it overdone, and the idle people began to drift south. Some of the miners had got rich and some had enjoyed themselves. Some of these, and other Americans, bought landed property of the Spaniards. Some of the miners who were still poor came south to strike a new country. In 1858 there were a thousand or fifteen hundred Americans in Los Angeles.

"From 1858 the town continued to increase in population, and in 1860 there were perhaps 2,500 or 3,000 Americans here, and a total population of twice that number, with the American element casting as many votes as the native and Spanish-American element. From 1860 the American element predominated and the other began to melt away. Of the lower grade Mexicans, Indians, and natives, some were driven back to Sonora and some to other places and into the surrounding country. From 1860 to 1870 there was a still greater increase of the American element, but the contrast in favor of the older races was such that the total population in 1870 had increased only to about 6,000 or 7,000. From 1870 to 1880 the influx of Americans continued, and the others continued to fade and disappear, the population in 1880 had risen to about 11,000. The climate pleased people, and the stranger's eye was captured by the semi-tropical fruits and plants. For myself, I have lived since I arrived from the East in 1854 I was going to California in search of health. We came overland in wagons by one of the southern trails. I had expected to go up into central California. We struck this place in February, and I thought I should not find any place I should like better, and I stayed. Since then I have been all over France and Italy, and I like this better than any other region.

"Rail communication with Los Angeles was opened by way of Sacramento in 1876, but the boom did not really begin until 1881, when the Southern Pacific, which had gone on building East, struck the Santa Fé at Deming. Then land began to go up, but not rapidly. Still there was rise enough to make people who had land hold on to it. As far back as 1865 a few old heads thought that land around was a good thing to have, but nobody had any idea of a boom. Between '70 and '80 there had been a satisfactory increase, enough to make some people begin to think more of the outside lands, and in 1881 some big ranches were picked up by outsiders, who seemed to have a glimmering that the property was worth getting hold of. When it was settled that we were to have railroad communication with the East the general thought was that we could supply Arizona, and that Eastern markets would be opened to us. There was a healthy advance in 1881, but what really was to happen I don't suppose was dreamed of by ten men in the community. The Southern Pacific was opened to New Orleans in 1882, and the population increased to about 15,000, and property began to stiffen, but still nobody expected any such rise as followed. Buyers continued to increase in number and prices continued to go up. Values in Los Angeles and vicinity rose 25 per cent. that year, but that 25 per cent. was on a previously very low valuation. More people were coming. In 1883 values doubled, and at the end of the year the population had gone up to 25,000. Now, some men who owned real property began to think they had a good thing. The progress continued through 1884 and into 1885. The Santa Fé road was on the way to Los Angeles, making another direct through road to the East. Some men now expected a flood, but nobody foresaw the deluge.

"I don't pretend to follow the boom after that. It was as though you had been watching a big building that was on fire. You saw the progress of the flames, the fire appeared at this window and at that, and burst through at this place, maybe, and then at another, and you managed to keep track of its progress until in a moment it burst out all over and beyond control."

The Santa Fé people got through in November, 1885, and after that it was a conflagration.

PROGRESS OF THE BOOM.

All Hands in the Real Estate Business as Buyers or Sellers, and Prices Going Up.

People poured in by thousands and prices of land began to climb. Everybody that could find an office went into the real estate business. Doctors, lawyers, and merchants shared the excitement, and some of them gave up their regular pursuits and pitched into real estate. Clergymen were not entirely unaffected, and there is a story of one bright young man who came over in answer to a call, but never got as far as the church; he was caught in the rising flood and swept into the real estate business. Offices were opened everywhere. Desk room was hired in stores, in hallways, wherever room could be found; and nearly all hands went into real estate in some way, either as agents, as speculators, or as operators big and little: for if a man couldn't buy a big tract he could buy a building lot, and make the first payment on it and take the chances of selling out at a profit before the second payment became due. Thousands of people did that—car drivers, merchants, clerks, newsdealers, and visitors and tourists piled in with the rest. The city of Los Angeles covers thirty-six square miles. That affords room for a good many building lots in the city of Los Angeles. Tracts of land were cut up into lots, the further enormous rise in values was predicted, auction sales were announced, band of music, free lunch, lively auctioneer, magnificent country, delightful climate, home of the orange, garden spot of the earth, sanitarium of the world, rattle off the lots, and have another sale. In one sale of lots that was made by selection, first choice to the first comer, the line in front of the seller's office began to form at 3 o'clock in the morning.

New towns sprang up on paper laid out and building lot stakes sprung up all about. If the new place was on the line of a railroad there were excursions to the auction sales, free lunch, music, and a buoyant auctioneer, who told of the glorious country and the finest property yet offered on the market. Sure to double and quadruple in a month. As one purchaser puts it, a city has been laid out from Los Angeles to the Cajon pass, sixty miles or so to the east—town lots all the way. This is a little bit imaginative, but not very much so. Some men say that they expect to see a continuous settlement, or settlements so close together as practically to be continuous from Los Angeles to San Bernardino, which is a region just within the same limits.

The town-lot craze spread all through Southern California. Many buyers made quick turns and took what profits they could get. Others held for still higher prices. Some bought lots and held them for their own use. Some of them reinvested profits and made more; others went on reinvesting, and a good many now hold lots which contain all the previous profits put into land at present prices.

Of the great number of lots bought in various parts of southern California by tourists, residents, and speculators, some have yielded enormous proportionate profit, many have returned large gains on some percentage of profit, and many are good to hold, and thousands will in all probability have to go back to acreage prices or else take quite a clinch loss to the investors. A moderate-minded man, who has himself grown rich in southern California, and who has perfect faith in the country, thinks half of the lots sold will go back to acreage, sold out or taxed out.

Many of the towns are yet awaiting development or are getting along the best way they can, waiting for a real boom to strike them. Many of them are bright, lively and flourishing, and have all the elements of success. Some towns, successful now, were planted in places where there was no natural demand for them. Aided by the climate, the attractiveness of the situation, and the general boom, projectors have stood under their towns and held them up by main strength and capital until they could get in the props, a hotel, a street railroad, meanwhile keeping the drums beating and the horns blowing and the flags flying, and getting in the people until the population and the water turned in, with enough to go of its own momentum.

In city, town, and country the prices of land advanced with amazing rapidity. In Los Angeles many of the advances have been astonishing. In 1860 the best business property in Los Angeles, a corner on Main street, could have been sold for $300 a front foot. Population then about 6,000. In 1870 the same lot would have brought $500 a front foot, the population being about the same as in 1860. In 1880, with a population of about 11,000, the same lot was counted as worth $1,000 a foot. In 1888, with a population of about 65,000, the lot is supposed to be worth $2,500 a foot, and is not for sale. This sample lot is in what was until a very few years ago the extreme highest valued quarter of the city. It is still a most substantial and permanent banking and commercial centre, but as the city has grown the centre of the retail trade and of fashionable business activity has tended southward, and at present it is at Spring and First streets. A piece of land on the southeast corner of these streets, being 120 feet on Spring street and 168 feet on First street, was bought in 1854 for about $500 for the piece. It is still held in the family of the original buyer. The value of this land had risen in 1880 to about $300 a front foot. Ninety feet on First street has since been covered with a profitable business block. For the remaining piece of 120 feet on Spring street and 78 feet on First street, an offer was made in 1887 of $3,000 a front foot, on Spring street, for the first 60 feet south from First street, and $2,500 a front foot for the other 60 feet, being $380,000 for the piece. Another offer of $2,500 a front foot or $300,000 for the piece, half cash, was made by a substantial citizen who is known to all the older residents of Los Angeles. These estimates were not all received by anything the property as safe and profitable as any investment that could have been made with the money offered. The bare land has now been leased for five years at $20,000 a year, and the lessee is putting up a business block, and is likely to make a good profit at that figure.

A gentleman who bought in 1878 for $750 a piece of 4¾ acres about one mile from the plaza, put on the land improvements in buildings costing about $14,000. When the boom started he sold the property for $50,000. The purchaser is now disposing of it at prices that will yield a further profit of $25,000 to $50,000.

Another man who bought in 1882, on a street about a quarter of a mile from the business centre, 3¾ acres for $2,800, on which he has put improvements costing about $5,000, refuses $100,000 for the property.

An offer of $90,000 was made for the lot on the northwest corner of Spring and Second, 100 feet on Spring and 165 feet on Second, was declined.

For a lot at Main and Sixth streets, that was sold five years ago for $20 a front foot, $800 a foot has been offered.

A city property having a frontage of 100 feet on the east side of Main street, between First and Requena streets, which was bought less than eighteen months ago for $1,000 a foot, twenty feet has been sold within three months for $31,000.

The southwest corner of Main and First streets, being 60 feet on Main street and 165 feet on First street, was bought in 1869 for $8,000. It could be sold now for $120,000.

One of the best informed real estate men said that the highest price actually paid in Los Angeles for property transferred was $1,700 a foot cash for a piece of 20 feet front on Main street which was bought in December by an estate to a bank which desired to enlarge its premises. Both parties considered this a fair price. While this property is in one of the best parts of the business section of the city, it is not in the most extremely high-priced part.

A resident of the city, who sold, in 1882, a house and lot on Spring street for $5,000 couldn't buy it back now for $50,000.

A piece of land of 171 acres within the city limits that was taken for a debt in 1878 and which then cost the man who took it about $3,000, is now selling at prices that will make the aggregate returns about $600,000.

In the cities of San Bernardino and San Diego, and, in fact, throughout the region, there have been many instances of the most wonderful multiplication of values. In 1885 when the Santa Fé Railroad reached the city of San Diego it had a population of about 4,000. It has 25,000 or 30,000 now, and is still growing. One piece of business property has been sold for $1,500 a front foot, but the best is generally held at from $1,000 to $1,300 a front foot.

A man who bought a city block in Riverside seven years ago for $1,000 has sold it for $101,000.

SPREADING OVER THE COUNTRY.

The Scent of Orange Blossoms Fills the Air, But the Town Lot is Not Forgotten.

The boom in outside property began early. The land in Los Angeles and the neighboring districts was pretty soon substantially sold out or held at prices that were then thought to be too near the top to afford much chance of further profit, and the enterprising speculators spread all over the surrounding country, the fields most extensively cultivated at first being Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties, though the city of San Bernardino and the region thereabout had had an extensive boom, which was still progressing; and San Diego had developed a boom which spread into the neighboring territory.

The State of California is 770 miles in length and 330 miles in breadth. Los Angeles county is two-thirds as big as the State of Massachusetts, San Bernardino county is as big as the State of West Virginia, and San Diego county is as big as Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island combined. In all these counties there are more or less mountains and desert lands, and in the two last-named there is a very large area of desert. Some of the mountain ranges are lofty and majestic. Leaving the desert out of consideration, the country is most varied, made up of mountains, hills, valleys, table lands and plains. A district generally within a hundred miles or less of the coast includes substantially the desirable parts of the region. In this district some of the large valleys are magnificent, and there are many lovely smaller valleys. The region is practically treeless, except on the tops of some of the mountains, along the few streams, and in some of the valleys near the coast. Much of the soil is wonderfully productive; no region presents greater variations in its soil. In some districts it is uniform and very deep, in others thin. Soils varying in color and characteristics may be found in the same district, and adjoining ranches may vary in productiveness. The varying elevations presented by the country, and the sheltering protection of mountains, or its absence, are to be taken into account in determining the use to which the soil shall be put. The rainy season is in the winter, and all this land requires irrigation. The climate is excellent, and the local temperature is determined mainly by elevation. On some of the lower mountains snow may be seen eight months in the year, or for even a longer period, but it does not fall in the valleys. In some places frosts sometimes occur. The climate is most uniform on the coast, and the variations in the daily range of the thermometer decrease as you go inland away from the coast of the regularly inhabited region, in the Colorado desert, the mercury has reached 135°, and 120° is scarcely considered remarkable.

On the coast the mercury does not frequently get above 90° in the summer season. Back in the country the summer days are often much warmer, but the dryness of the atmosphere makes the heat much more tolerable than in the east, and a westerly breeze almost always prevails in the afternoon, and the nights are always cool. To this region of manifold natural attractions, where also almost anything that the soil will produce will grow and thrive, and which had already in some of its parts drawn settlers, the speculators now invited attention, and the response was something unparalleled in the history of the settlement of the country.

It should be said that it was not a wholly unsettled region. Besides the few heretofore referred to as having bought land in the early days there had been, even before the railroads, a gentle stream of immigration that had increased somewhat after the first opening of rail communication. Some orange trees had been planted, and in a few cases had been real processes of it been made in the cultivation of fruit, and a few modest little towns had been started. These earlier buyers got lands very cheap. An Eastern physician bought, in 1873, a tract of 368 acres in what was even then considered a desirable location, and which is now rapidly being cut up, for $11 an acre. A considerable part of it is now planted and in various stages of cultivation, and it is probable that $500 an acre for the whole tract would be considered a very moderate valuation. In some instances there have been very much greater advances from a still smaller purchasing price.

Great tracts of land were bought by speculators and subdivided and sold in tracts to suit purchasers. Some of the speculators were men of large capital, and some had next to none. The capitalists risked their money, the others took the risk of coming out ahead and nearly all of them did, for the flood of buyers and the steady and enormous rise in the values of lands lifted the earlier large buyers clean above all difficulties. New life was put into many small places previously settled, and many new enterprises were launched on and the place never been touched. Some of the land which only a few years before could scarcely have been given away, but which has been shown with proper cultivation to be among the best, was bought at extremely low figures, but eligible land all about the city of Los Angeles, where the climate admitted of that without discomfort. If it was on the line of a railroad, the side track was filled with cars loaded with lumber when builders were fortunate enough to get it in this season of demand greater than supply. Houses, very many of them not large mansions, but houses for all that, of good materials, went up with a celerity that was astonishing. If there was brick clay in the neighborhood, they made bricks and slammed up a brick block or two. These looked well, both on the face of the earth and in the advertisement, and people came by the excursion from Los Angeles, a train load of people with a free lunch at the hotel or on the grounds, the excursionists marching thither headed by the band. Fine weather, glorious country, activity and progress in sight, electrical auctioneer, rising market. Sold! What is the name, sir? Mr. Buyer would like to have the extreme end of the acre, costing from 75 cents to $1.75 each, according to the age and kind of the young tree. Budded trees begin producing at from three to four years. After that the produce of the tree increases annually, except that some kinds of trees have alternating years of larger and smaller bearing. While the planter is waiting for the orange trees to grow, he may of course cultivate other crops, but there is nothing that requires more intelligent and careful and faithful attention than an orange grove. Some men produce as much from one acre as others from five. It much depends on the care of from the beginning, and allowance made for possible damages by the elements, frosts, and high winds, insects, and whatever uncertainties attend oranges as any other crop. A man intending to buy land would do well to spend some time in the region, and to ascertain, among other points, the facts about the soil, the trees best adapted to it, the water supply, the liability to frost, and the shelter from high winds.

Lands adapted to the cultivation of other fruits are held at prices somewhat lower than orange lands. Without enumerating the various fruits produced and their known or anticipated returns, it may be said of the raisin grape that while it does not yield as large returns as are expected of oranges, the production of raisins is one of the features of the State. In some parts fine results have already been attained, and the production shows a large and steady increase. A Los Angeles merchant said that some of the land in southern California now most valuable could not at one time have been given away, and that hundreds of thousands of acres of land as good as any could be bought now within fifteen and twenty miles of Los Angeles for $100 to $150 an acre. In some parts lands may be bought at prices lower than these figures, but in all these cases the land is either not adapted to the cultivation of the special crops that are expected to yield the largest profits, or they are remote from the parts more inhabited, or not convenient to avenues of transportation.

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE BOOM.

Prices of Land—Condition of Values—Culture and Profits.

People are still going into Southern California, and in numbers perhaps greater than ever. Many are buying lands and settling on them, but in most parts the boom, as a craze, seems to be practically over. Some producing orange lands, and some bare lands in choice sections, are attaining higher prices. Of lands in one of the most attractive districts, some bare and some with trees of various ages, a well-informed man said he thought it was at least as high now as it was a year ago. The offerings of new lands are ample for all demands. The town lot excitement is substantially at an end. There are still some sales, but the scrambling for lots has ceased. To some extent auction sales of acreage property in small pieces, single acres and upward, bought chiefly for speculative purposes, have taken the place of the town lot sales. Acre is a word with a broad and pleasant sound, and something is doing in this line, but not much as compared with the town lot business.

There is less outside demand for lumber, showing that there is a lull in the town building business, though many of the towns are full of life and building is going on rapidly in them. There are many places that seem to be thriving finely and with the country all around filling up with people, and land in town and country firmly held at high prices. Other places have stood still or gone on very gradually.

A substantial citizen of Los Angeles expressed the opinion that if people keep coming prices will continue upward. Another citizen said that the values in the city and country property were increasing; that occasionally somebody got sick or disgusted and sold out for less than he paid, but that there was nothing so cheap as a year ago. Another man said that any first class property offered was taken at once. A real estate agent with whom I was riding through a slightly place said: "Lots along here are cheaper than they were six months ago. Second payments are due and they don't want to pay them." He had received letters from owners in various places requesting him to sell their lots. Very nearly all of these lot buyers had bought for speculation and had failures to sell. They must make the payments or lose the lots. Nearly all of the land has been sold on credit. In a great majority of cases the deed does not pass until the payments are completed. The land is sold on an agreement to sell in which the purchaser agrees to pay all taxes and assessments, and, as one form provides, "In the event of a failure to comply with the terms hereof by the said party of the second part, the said party of the first part shall be released from all obligations in law or equity to convey said property, and said party of the second part shall forfeit all rights thereto, and the said party of the first part, on receiving such payment at the time and in the manner above mentioned, agrees to execute and deliver to the said party of the second part, or to his assigns, a good and sufficient deed."

This and similar forms have proved very convenient in the rush of active and frequent transfers, but they mean business to the men that still hold them when payments are due.

In a fairly representative district devoted in its cultivated parts chiefly to fruit growing, and in what may be called a middle stage of development, it was found that some buyers were slow in making second payments, but that generally they were being made promptly. But very little of the land has been bought for all cash. Rates of interest are generally high, scarcely less than eight per cent., but one man said that there had been very little foreclosure thus far, and that he had not been ahead nearly all of them did, for the flood of buyers and the steady and enormous rise in the values of lands lifted the earlier large buyers clean above all difficulties. New life was put into many small places previously settled, and many new enterprises were launched on and the place never been touched. Some of the land which only a few years before could scarcely have been given away, but which has been shown with proper cultivation to be among the best, was bought at extremely low figures, but eligible land all about the city of Los Angeles, where the climate admitted of that without discomfort. If it was on the line of a railroad, the side track was filled with cars loaded with lumber when builders were fortunate enough to get it in this season of demand greater than supply. Houses, very many of them not large mansions, but houses for all that, of good materials, went up with a celerity that was astonishing. If there was brick clay in the neighborhood, they made bricks and slammed up a brick block or two. These looked well, both on the face of the earth and in the advertisement, and people came by the excursion from Los Angeles, a train load of people with a free lunch at the hotel or on the grounds, the excursionists marching thither headed by the band. Fine weather, glorious country, activity and progress in sight, electrical auctioneer, rising market. Sold! What is the name, sir? Mr. Buyer would like to have the extreme end of the acre, costing from 75 cents to $1.75 each, according to the age and kind of the young tree. Budded trees begin producing at from three to four years. After that the produce of the tree increases annually, except that some kinds of trees have alternating years of larger and smaller bearing. While the planter is waiting for the orange trees to grow, he may of course cultivate other crops, but there is nothing that requires more intelligent and careful and faithful attention than an orange grove. Some men produce as much from one acre as others from five. It much depends on the care of from the beginning, and allowance made for possible damages by the elements, frosts, and high winds, insects, and whatever uncertainties attend oranges as any other crop. A man intending to buy land would do well to spend some time in the region, and to ascertain, among other points, the facts about the soil, the trees best adapted to it, the water supply, the liability to frost, and the shelter from high winds.

Lands adapted to the cultivation of other fruits are held at prices somewhat lower than orange lands. Without enumerating the various fruits produced and their known or anticipated returns, it may be said of the raisin grape that while it does not yield as large returns as are expected of oranges, the production of raisins is one of the features of the State. In some parts fine results have already been attained, and the production shows a large and steady increase. A Los Angeles merchant said that some of the land in southern California now most valuable could not at one time have been given away, and that hundreds of thousands of acres of land as good as any could be bought now within fifteen and twenty miles of Los Angeles for $100 to $150 an acre. In some parts lands may be bought at prices lower than these figures, but in all these cases the land is either not adapted to the cultivation of the special crops that are expected to yield the largest profits, or they are remote from the parts more inhabited, or not convenient to avenues of transportation.

IN LOS ANGELES CITY.

Wages, Rents, Cost of Living, and Something About the Real Estate Men.

The Los Angeles Post Office has six general delivery windows to accomodate the great number of visitors and strangers. The city is full of business, and in wet weather the streets are muddy, for the town has grown so fast that many of the streets remain unpaved. Work is being done in that direction. The old part of the town makes but little show, for the new city has almost overrun and entirely eclipsed it. The city has encroached upon neighboring hills that once were thought of little value, but that now are held at high prices. Some beautiful residences have been built on these hills and elsewhere in the city, but not so many as would be found in Eastern cities of the same size. It is as though the inhabitants had been so busy with the rush of business of the boom that they had not found time to devote to building fine houses; but there are streets in various parts of the town that are lined with pretty but comparatively unpretentious homes. On the terraces the grass was green in February and roses were in bloom. Besides the several lines of horse cars there are two lines of cable cars. One of the cable lines in crossing the hills takes grades and goes through cuts that are steeper and deeper than any in San Francisco, the home of the cable car. You see many one-story houses. The planted trees are mainly blue gums and pepper trees, and some kinds of palms. Small hotels abound. Open doors and windows are an ordinary sight on warm days in the latter season, and open street cars are common. It is cooler in the evening, and overcoats are useful. The city is lighted by electric lights on high poles, some of which are placed on the hills. Seen from the lower parts of the city, through the fog or mist that nightfall sometimes brings, these higher lights look like stars.

Building is going on actively, but perhaps not so much so as some visitors had expected to see. Builders say that more buildings than ever are going up, and that more money is being put into the buildings. There has been a great deal of speculative building, but the supply is easier now, though delays occur for lack of special materials that are needed to make the whole, as, for instance, lime. A great deal of unseasoned lumber has been used in the haste to supply urgent demands. Carpenters generally receive now $3.50 to $4 a day, and some ask that much. There is a good deal of work and supervision required of the men in charge of work. Wages have been higher, but carpenters have come from all over the country, though principally from Iowa and Kansas and other middle States, and there is now no scarcity of skilled mechanics. Machinists get about the same as carpenters, and bricklayers $5 and $6 a day. There is disadvantage for carpenters and others doing outdoor work, and that is that it may be followed more days in the year than in the East. Work may be done outdoor, the year around, except in the rainy season, which does not average more than two months. The regular hours of work are nine hours a day, except on Saturdays, when they are eight and a half hours. Laborers get $2.25 a day.

Clerks, salesmen, and other men of indoor occupations receive about the same pay as elsewhere, and the supply of men is ample.

Good servant girls are in demand. A Chinese or Chinese man cook receives $35 a month. Women to cook and do housework, such as get $14 and $16 a month in the East, get $30 and $35 a month in Los Angeles, with the washing all put out. Housemaids get $20 and $25 a month and upwards, with the same, and all these workers are in demand at these rates.

The cost of food is about the same as in San Francisco. Vegetables are cheaper than in the East; flour is dearer. Fuel, both wood and coal, is much more costly than in the East, but the climate bulks far more temperate, much less fuel being required for cooking purposes. Altogether the cost of living is perhaps a little less than in the East.

Rents are very high for a city of this size. Five dollars per room per month is about the way ordinary houses run at a distance of seven or ten blocks from the business part of the city. This would make a cottage of five rooms $25 a month. Nearer the business part of town they cost more. A house of four rooms three blocks from business was rented for $40 a month. In some less desirable parts of the city houses of four rooms, with water, half a dozen squares from the Post Office, may be hired for $15 a month. Some houses of five to seven rooms in good localities, half a mile from business, rent for $40 a month, and in some parts of the city houses of six rooms, with bathroom and kitchen building, within one mile of the business centre, rent for $60 to $80 a month. Some Eastern visitors hire houses and rent rooms, but the office rents are high. Single lodging rooms in blocks in the business parts of the city rent for $30 a month and upward. Sitting room and bedroom, with a bath, in the business part of town, bring $50 a month. There are cheaper rooms in the city, but rents generally are high. One enterprising man who was looking for a chance to make money, found a dwelling house with a front yard about eighteen feet deep and thirty feet wide, standing in a street upon which business buildings had encroached until they stood on each side of the dwelling. He leased the front yard for $46 a month; $540 a year. He put up a one-story brick building for $400, and divided it into two stores and a passage way to the house in the rear. One store he leased for $125 a month, the smaller store he leased for $75 a month; total, $2,400 a year. Lease of land, $540 per annum. Cost of new building, $400; outlay first year, $940. Income, $2,400; profit, $1,460 and the building.

There are about 450 real estate agents in Los Angeles, which is about 100 less than there were a year ago. Many of those who went in on the first flush of the boom have now gone out of the business. In a city of 65,000 inhabitants 450 real estate offices make a conspicuous show. They abound in the business parts of the city, and in some places there are almost solid blocks of them. Real estate men appeared from north, south, east and west, just as men flock to a new mining camp, and a great many of them were lightly laden with money. The great speculative land operations are now mainly in the hands of men from Boston and Chicago and Kansas City and St. Louis, and other Western points. There are comparatively few speculators from New York.

The dealers, big and little, are keen men of all ages. There are large, calm men, of dignified bearing, and older men with gray hair whose conservative manner and speech seem to leave no room for doubt of the values of the properties they offer; middle-aged, earnest, persuasive men; and lots of buoyant young rustles who believe that the future value of the lands is boundless, and who have no doubt that whatever land you may buy will be sure to increase in value. As is commonly done through the region, some of the agents here keep teams standing in front of their offices ready to take visitors to lands that they have for sale. Many an Eastern visitor who has taken a ride in these carriages on the expressed desire to look at the lands has chuckled to himself over his smartness in standing the real estate man up for a free drive, but a little thing like that doesn't disturb the real estate agent. He expects it. And many such rides have ended to his profit.

Some of the offices may be 6 by 10 feet in size, many are of comfortable dimensions, with big iron safes and good office furniture and a generally business-like appearance, and some of them occupy rooms in business blocks as are ordinarily devoted to commercial pursuits. One concern, which is handling a number of large tracts, has an immense place like a Broadway store, hung on the sides with pictures and maps of the lands for sale, and down the centre of the store is a long row of placards mounted on stands with the prices of the lots. Some big stores are divided by railings into a dozen or twenty spaces, making as many offices. Colored lithograph maps are displayed in and in front of many offices; bunches of hand bills containing florid descriptions of nature-favored localities are hung in front of some offices, and on awning posts. A scaffolding was erected in front of a building to facilitate repairs. A bunch of hand bills was tacked on before the scaffolding was completed. Real estate signs are conspicuous in hotel offices. Occasionally you see a wagon load of people with a brass band and display the advertisement of a real estate sale parading the streets. Here is a wagon bearing a placard reading, "Free ride to ——," where land is on the market. A very bright and fly young man from New York city, who is now at work in Los Angeles, laughed as he said that he had been picked up in a hotel office by a capper for a real estate dealer who had something good to offer to him; but no cappers were encountered by the writer of this article.

SIGNIFICANT FACTS AND FIGURES.

The Transfers of Real Estate—Population—Railroad Traffic.

The transfers of real estate in Los Angeles county (including the city) for the past six years are given in the following table:

1882	$6,383,120	1885	$9,093,852
1883	9,148,131	1886	25,074,164
1884	9,738,220	1887	38,243,428

The transfers in San Bernardino and San Diego counties during the same period were, of course, much less in the aggregate, but the proportionate increase was almost, if not quite as great. The transfers in Los Angeles county in January, 1887, were $5,093,270; in January, 1888, $6,538,697.

The transfers from agents have been decreasing in number; the transfers from estates and owners of large tracts increasing.

There has been some fraud and swindling in the course of these enormous transactions, as might have been expected in a comparatively new country, where so many were diving in to make money and doing business on the rush. The sale of town lots in the desert at $2 apiece is scarcely worth mentioning. It seems as though no man ought to be taken in by such an offer, though a good many have been. There has been some downright misrepresentation of property, whereby purchasers have been swindled either through ignorance or because they did not take the trouble to look at the property. In some cases sellers without conscience, who had misrepresented land, have been chagrined to find that they hadn't put it half strong enough; that the land was really more valuable than they had painted it; but this kind of fraud has not been common. In some cases men contracted with original owners to buy tracts of land, cut them up, and rushed them on the market, pocketed first payments, and left the buyers and the original owner to wrestle over the land. As in other parts of the country, the precautions will insure against ordinary fraud; as to actual or prospective values, the buyer must decide for himself upon investigation.

The population of California in 1880 was 864,694. The estimated population now is 1,300,000. Of the increase since 1880, San Francisco has taken about 100,000, making her present estimated population 230,000. The rest are scattered through the State, with a large majority of them in southern California. Many are going into southern counties other than those more particularly referred to herein, where, speaking generally, nature may present fewer attractions, and the catalogue of special crops is in many localities more limited, but where the soil is productive and the land much cheaper.

The total number of through passengers of all classes carried in and out of California in the year 1887 by the Southern Pacific Company over the Central Pacific Railroad and the Southern Pacific Railroad was 158,790. Of these 98,291 were west bound and 60,499 east bound. The total number of through passengers of all classes carried over the California Southern Railroad and the California Central Railway, which are the California ends of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé Railroad, was 67,119. Of these 56,016 were west bound and 11,103 east bound. To be added are those carried over the Northern Pacific Railroad and by the sea. The California travel in January, '88, is reported heavier than in January, 1887.

Of the people who have gone into southern California very many are accustomed to churches, schools, newspapers, railroads, and all the progressive forms of civilization, and in their new homes they assume at once and quite as a matter of course all the responsibilities of citizenship. Some have gone to cultivate the soil or to follow various callings; some in search of health; some families have gone because one member was ailing; some have gone to escape the rigors of northern climates; some because they like the country or with the hope of making money or with the desire to try something new, and they have gone from all parts and from town and country.

The conditions are such that of those who bought land with the idea of making money by tilling the soil many have for various reasons not achieved success in that direction, though they may have made money in other ways. Here is a man who bought ten acres for $140 an acre. A town grew in close proximity to his land and spread over it. He sold seven acres for $15,000, and, of course, he can't tell how his planting might have turned out. Some have tired of waiting for the trees to come to bearing. Some have bought more land or set out more trees than they could care for. Some have found their soil not specially adapted to the crops selected, or not so good as they had expected. Some have not given the proper amount of attention, or have not bestowed it at the proper time. To a majority of the newcomers the conditions are new, and they have to acquire needed information by inquiry, observation, or experience.

Some have prospered or are on the way to prosperity by the cultivation of the land. Many orchards are only just planted, or are not yet come to bearing, and not a few of the owners are possessed of some means and are able to wait. Many of the first purchasers have made money by the sale of a part of their lands and by the enhancement in value of the whole. Who buys land now should expect to buy on its merits.

At the time when the observations here recorded were made, in February, the great boom was in a state of comparative quietude. Many people expressed entire confidence that this season will show a further substantial rise in values, and that the rise will be warranted by the continued inflow of people, increased demand for the land, and by its actual value as determined by productiveness as well. Others thought that the boom would lie dormant for a time, awaiting natural development; that some of the large undertakings might be less vigorously prosecuted, and some of the big hotels not be finished so promptly as had been expected.

Of financial distress there is no sign. Much of the land now selling is bought for settlement. Many have made money, and some a great deal of it. The losses are so widely distributed that whatever their aggregate may be it is difficult to see how they can exert a serious influence. Most of the large enterprises now on foot are controlled by men of means, principally from outside States, though some of the largest are in the hands of substantial citizens of the region, who have reinvested profits with a confident belief in the future. Of course it is possible that some large enterprise may fail with a crash, but there is no indication of any such event.

Special localities in Southern California, as elsewhere, may reasonably attain very high values through the presence of special attractions, and the region is rich in these; but to by far the greater part of the country, while it possesses advantages that will have some weight in the balance, it seems probable that the universal test must finally be applied. It is not to be expected that lands adapted to special crops, yielding exceptionally great returns, may be bought for the prices that attach to lands adapted to the cultivation of wheat and corn; but one general rule for the measurement of values applies practically to all. The question is, Will the land yield average fair returns on its cost? and surely all will hope that of those thus far received the favorable responses indicate the nature of the answers yet to come.

JOHN B. BOGART.

A DUEL AT EGG EATING.

Fifty-three Eggs Swallowed by the Winner to Twenty by the Loser.

ANSONIA, April 19.—A duel at egg eating took place at West Ansonia on Tuesday between a farmer from Bungay and a New Haven saloon keeper. Michael Beegan, the New Haven man, was calling at a saloon as James Brennan, the farmer, brought in a basket containing eight and a half dozen of fresh eggs. Taking an egg and breaking it into a glass of sherry, Beegan swallowed the compound with an apparent gusto that amused Brennan. The talk turned on egg eating, and finally the New Havenur, whose weight is in the neighborhood of 250 pounds, put up $10 that he could eat more raw eggs in a given time than the Bungay agriculturist.

The money was promptly covered